Empowering for Success of Women in Computing  
--- Legacies, Problems and Solutions

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Abstract

This study addresses different aspects of the CUNY Computer Science environment that relate to the professional development and gender issues of many female graduate students, female professors and research staff. As we all know, computer science is a challenging, competitive, and difficult subject for both men and women. However, from the “prehistory” of computers (Ada Lovelace) through its early history and up to the present, women have made fundamental and unique contributions to computer science. The last twenty years have played marginal role for women in computer science and technology. Women are making progress and gaining equal treatment from society. However, there still exists a major number of differences between men and women working in the field of computer science and technology.

A key objective of this study is to identify courses of action and areas where academia can provide significant progress towards the goal of bringing and retaining more women to the computer science field. We wanted to identify factors of under-representation of women in CS and offer help in creating a positive and empowering environment for women where they can continue to grow both professionally and personally. Computer science has been a key source of skilled IT professionals and is thus an important consideration. Bringing diversity to information technology is crucial and will give women more economic and social power.

Many women in CS encounter additional problems that limit their academic, professional, and personal growth nowadays. What are the problems? How did they solve the problems? What is the definition of a success as a female? Why do women pursue careers in computer science and related fields far less frequently than men do?

Our survey shows that there are two primary and consistent challenges facing female PhD students:

- Pressures encountered.
- Difficulties in balancing career and family responsibilities.

The survey of CUNY female professors that we conducted during the summer of year 2002 clearly shows that not even 30% of teachers in the field of computer science and technology are women. As we all know, computer science and technology is a very competitive and challenging subject not only for women but also for men as well. However, our professors found their life excitement and adventure in their chosen field.